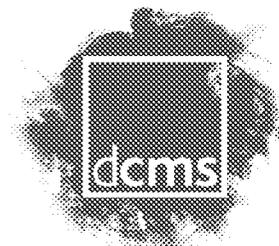


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Lord Justice Leveson
The Leveson Inquiry
Royal Courts of Justice,
Strand,
London
WC2A 2LL

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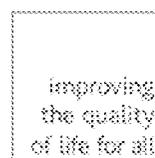
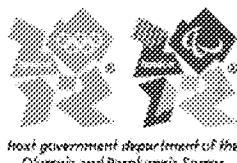
Dear Lord Justice Leveson,

During my oral evidence to the Inquiry you invited me to provide a more detailed written submission on how to deal with the issues of press regulation in a period of technological change where increasing amounts of content are produced online. This is a particular challenge because EU law requires “TV-like” content to be statutorily regulated - and it seems likely that newspapers will want to produce more of such content, albeit delivered over broadband rather traditional broadcasting methods.

The status, independence, function and purpose of future press regulation is of central and primary interest to your Inquiry and I await your recommendations with great interest. I do not seek to prejudge them in any way, but thought it might be helpful if I shared some of my thinking as to how technology changes might impact on the overall picture.

In particular I am keen that any change in regulatory structure that is introduced should stand the test of time and avoid the risk of obsolescence. A regulator that continues only to focus on print-based media, and seeks membership exclusively from those organisations who come from that world, could end up either as irrelevant or alternatively place its industry at a serious disadvantage at a time when there is a premium on innovation. This is particularly relevant when the business model for traditional newspapers is becoming less viable, principally because they are losing readers and display advertising is not as easy to monetise online.

I am assuming that your recommendations will create a successor body to the PCC that is credibly independent from both politicians and serving editors/proprietors and also manages to solve the “Desmond” problem of non-participation. It is my hope that such a body could not only act as a complaints arbitrator, but also a champion of both freedom of expression and journalistic standards. Given the enhanced credibility such an organisation would have, I believe that additionally we should consider



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whether the successor body to the Press Complaints Commission could become a one-stop-shop for *all* news output by newspaper groups and not just their print output.

“TV like” on-demand content (broadly speaking content that has the characteristics of TV programmes but is available on-demand as opposed to as part of a linear schedule) is currently regulated by an organisation called Atvod, under Ofcom’s authority. My suggestion is that authority for regulation of any such content produced by newspapers should be delegated to the successor body to the PCC so that newspaper groups would have the benefit of a regulatory “one-stop shop.” This would allow newspapers to diversify into new types of audio-visual content. It would simplify regulatory requirements significantly, thereby encouraging and facilitating the production of news in new technology formats. It would be a first step towards a more converged approach to regulation.

I do not believe online-only news providers – bloggers for example – should be obliged or in any way pressured to sign up to such a structure. However if membership of the body was synonymous with high journalistic standards and professional integrity then they might choose to do so.

The proposals set out in this presentation are intended to stimulate debate and are made to the Inquiry in the spirit of the rest of Module IV, so that these ideas can be fully and publicly debated as part of your Inquiry. It is one approach amongst what I am sure are many other valid ways we could help account for technological change in any new successor body to the PCC, but I did feel it worthwhile setting out an approach to this issue now, and in doing so place the issues out in the open, so that this important dimension is debated as part of the solution.

I hope that it is a helpful contribution to the debate.



Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport